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Belize

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Country Report

2002

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Report Highlights:

This report contains information on food laws, labeling requirements, pesticides, copyrights and trademark laws, import procedures, tariffs and customs clearance for the import of food and agricultural products into Belize.

Includes PSD changes: No
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Guatemala [GT1], BH

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BELIZE :**FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL IMPORT REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS (FAIRS)****Last Update: May, 2002****Sections Updated: All**

"This report was prepared by the Office of Agricultural Affairs of the USDA/Foreign Agricultural Service in Guatemala City, Guatemala, for U.S. exporters of domestic food and agricultural products. While every possible care was taken in the preparation of this report, information provided may not be completely accurate either because policies have changed since its preparation, or because clear and consistent information about these policies was not available. It is highly recommended that U.S. exporters verify the full set of import requirements with their foreign customers, who are normally best equipped to research such matters with local authorities, before any goods are shipped. FINAL IMPORT APPROVAL OF ANY PRODUCT IS SUBJECT TO THE IMPORTING COUNTRY'S RULES AND REGULATIONS AS INTERPRETED BY BORDER OFFICIALS AT THE TIME OF PRODUCT ENTRY."

I. FOOD LAWS

There are various Government agencies in Belize that are involved with the food laws. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has the legal responsibility of food safety and quarantine. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has the responsibility in terms of local production and import quotas. Finally, the Belize Bureau of Standards is responsible for all food standards and labeling laws.

In accordance with section 86 of the Belize Agricultural Health act, No. 47 of 1999, in April of 2000, Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) was launched, and the purpose of this agency was to incorporate and modernize plant health, animal health and quarantine services of Belize. This agency is still under the umbrella of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, but on its board of directors there are members from its parent ministry as well as the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Bureau of Standards.

For the purpose of shipping food and agricultural products from the U.S., exporters will deal directly with (BAHA) for all phytosanitary and sanitary issues. BAHA is responsible for approving the import procedure, and when needed will process import applications with other agencies for approvals.

The documentation needed for importing food and agricultural products into Belize are an import permit from BAHA, phytosanitary or sanitary certificate and certificate of origin, commercial invoice and bill of lading. Most plant products will also need a certificate of treatment and inspection by quarantine officials.

Belize does not have a product registration law, therefore the products sanitary permit number issued by the country of origin is automatically accepted in Belize.

II. LABELING REQUIREMENTS

All processed products are required by law to be labeled in Belize. Since, English is the official language, U.S. products fulfill all the requirements almost by default, however U.S. firms should verify that all of the following requirements are met. The label must include:

- The name of the food
- List of ingredients, in descending order
- Net contents and drained weight
- Name and address of the manufacturer
- Country of origin
- Batch/Lot identification
- Date marketing and storage instructions
- Instructions for use

General Exemption - A processed food that is prepackaged and labeled in English in accordance

with the laws and standards in force in Canada, the Caribbean Community, the European union, or the United States of America shall be deemed to comply with this standard.

Food Additives - Food additives also fall under the responsibility of the Bureau of Standards, and said agency uses Codex Alimentarius as its standard. The law as stated in Article 4.3.2.3 says that food additives falling in the respective classes and appearing in the list of food additives permitted for use in foods generally, the following class titles shall be together with the specific name or recognized numerical identification as required by national legislation.

Anti-caking agents	Antioxidants	Colors
Emulsifiers	Flavor Enhancers	Glazing Agents
Preservatives	Stabilizers	Thickeners
Gelling Agents	Flour Treatment agents	Anti-Foaming agents
Artificial Sweeteners	Acidity Regulators	Propellants
Rasing Agents/ Baking Powder	Emulsifying Salts	

III. PESTICIDES AND OTHER CONTAMINANTS

Pesticides are regulated by the Pesticide Control Board, which is an agency within the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Belize uses internationally accepted standards and pesticides entering the country must be registered at the Pesticide Control Board located in Central Farm, Cayo District, Belize.

IV. OTHER REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the sanitary rules and regulations for imports of food and agricultural products, there is also an import license that must be obtained from the Ministry of Trade and Industry for certain products that are considered by the government to compete with local production. The license is issued when there is a shortfall between local production and demand. Importers must request this license at least one week in advance, prior to shipment. The license will be specific in terms of the amount allowed to be imported and for how long this license is valid. The application for the license is done at BAHA and the officer assigned to the case will internally request the Ministry of Trade for the approval. The Office of Agricultural Affairs has observed that many times the licenses are approved for certain commodities, but the quantities permitted are so small as to not be economically feasible to import. There are many products that require this import permit, below is a list of these products.

Rice	Beans	Eggs
Flour	Fresh Fruits	Fresh Vegetables
Frozen Vegetables	Meats & Meat Preparations	Poultry (fresh or frozen)
Citrus Beverages	Jams & Jellies	Uncooked pasta
Peanuts	Molasses & Sugar	Beer and Sodas
Maize (Corn)	Milk	Fruits frozen or dried
Furniture of Wood	Lumber	Animal feed

V. COPYRIGHTS AND TRADEMARK LAWS

Although product registration is not required in Belize, trademarks are protected. Belize is a member of the WTO and a signatory of Trade -Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which was set up to protect intellectual property. Copyright violations have not been a problem in Belize, property rights are well understood in this country which was a British Colony for many centuries, and part of the British Commonwealth.

VI. IMPORT PROCEDURES

The import procedure begins at the nearest Belize Agriculture Health Authority office, herein referred to as the Authority. For a list of the offices please refer to Appendix II.

A. APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO IMPORT PLANTS OR PLANT PRODUCTS

1. GENERAL

- a. Permits should be received at least one week prior to placing an order for an article to be imported.
- b. Processing of an application is one week , but may extend to several months depending on the commodity type and whether a Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) must be conducted to determine the plant health risks for importation.
- c. Permits are usually approved more readily if there is an indication of the exporter being a supplier of certified planting material.

- d. Permits on being granted will indicate the plant health requirements the exporter must satisfy before allowed entry to Belize. It is therefore important that the applicant copies the permit to his supplier before purchase of the commodity is made in order to determine whether the exporter country can satisfy requirements of entry. Normal documentation that will be requested is a phytosanitary certificate and certificate of origin. If it is a live plant or wood product, a certification of treatment will also be requested.

2. LEGAL

- a. A person may apply for a permit if the person:
 - 1. Is a Belizean citizen or permanent resident.
 - 2. Is authorized under the laws of Belize to reside in Belize for a period of six months or more and will have the possession, care or control of the Restricted Article to be imported.
 - 3. In the case of a corporation with a place of business in Belize, is an agent or officer of the corporation who resides in Belize.
- b. A person applying for a permit shall, if required by the Authority, furnish the Authority, prior to issuance of the permit:
 - 1. Samples of the Restricted Article to be imported, without charge to the Belize Authority for examination purpose.
 - 2. Evidence that the person has adequate facilities for inspection and, if necessary, for quarantine.
 - 3. The samples referred to may be kept by the Authority.
- c. The Authority shall refuse to issue a permit if an application for the permit contains any false or misleading information.
- d. Where a person obtains a permit on the basis of an application that contains false or misleading information, the permit is void .
- e. Where the Authority has reasonable grounds to believe, on the basis of plant pest risk assessment, that the importation of a "Restricted Article" will result or would likely result in the introduction into Belize, or the spread within Belize, of a "Restricted Article" that is a plant pest, is or could be infested or constitutes or could constitute a biological obstacle to the control of plant pest, the Authority shall issue a permit in respect to the Restricted Article if the Authority determines that every precaution necessary to prevent the introduction into Belize or the spread within Belize of any plant pest or biological obstacle to the control of a plant pest can be taken.
- f. Where the Authority has reasonable grounds to believe, on the basis of plant pest risk

assessment, that the requirements above are not met, the Authority shall refuse to issue permit.

B. ANIMAL HEALTH IMPORT PERMIT

1. GENERAL

- a. An animal health import permit will only be issued by an authorized officer of the Authority. The Authority will only authorize veterinary officers employed by the Authority and will grant the authority in writing.
- b. Permits will only be granted if there is an application for a permit to import animals, animal products and by-products, biological, animal feed and animal health products.
- c. Applications for permits to import animal or animal products are to be made using forms AH1 or AH2 as applicable.
- d. The processing of applications for import permits will be done within a day of application with a permit being granted within a week of application. There is a BLZ\$10 fee.
- e. The processing of applications requiring risk analysis will require at least one month but the importer will be notified of this within one week of application. There is a fee not less than BLZ\$100 for a risk analysis. Where the risk analysis requires field visits within and outside the country, the cost will be borne by the prospective importer.
- f. The processing of applications requiring licenses from other government agencies will only be done after those licenses have been granted. (Almost all animal products require a license from the Ministry of Trade, but the Authority processes the license internally)
- g. Applications are:
 - 1. Restricted to one single species per application.
 - 2. Restricted to one type of animal product and biological with the single species.
 - 3. Limited to 10 items per type of animal product and biological product
 - 4. Limited to 10 items per application other than for animal product and biological product. This limit does not apply to the importation of livestock.
- h. Application must be made in time for the original permit to be sent with the order so that it can accompany the shipment and exporting agency can comply with its conditions.
(for the US the condition is normally a veterinarian certificate or sanitary certificate)
- i. Permits requiring quarantine of animals or commodity will not be issued until the owner has satisfied BAH's requirements for quarantine or imported animals or commodity.

- j. Importers should not have their commodities shipped until an import permit has been issued. Where permits need to be rushed because the commodity is already at the port, there will be a charge of BLZ\$200 if the permit is granted. If a permit cannot be granted the commodity will be sent back to origin, confiscated or destroyed.
- k. The import permit is valid only if:
 - 1. It is signed by a duly authorized officer.
 - 2. It has not expired. The permit is valid for 60 or 90 days as stated from date of issue.
 - 3. It contains no scratches or alterations.

2. **LEGAL**

- b. No person or entity shall import or offer to bring into Belize any animal, animal carcass, animal product, biological, feed and litter except under the permit by the Authority.
- c. Every person or entity shall, at the time of importation into Belize of animal, animal carcass, animal product, biological, feed and litter, declare the importation to a Quarantine Officer at the designated port of entry and present such importation and accompanying documents for inspection to the Quarantine officer or Veterinary officer of the Authority. All documents must be original copies.
- d. Ports of entry for the importation of animal, animal carcass, animal product, biological, feed and litter:
 - 1. Corozal District - Santa Elena Northern Border
 - 2. Orange Walk - Blue Creek
 - 3. Belize District - Belize Port Authority, Phillip Goldson International Airport, San Pedro, Ambergris Caye
 - 4. Cayo District - Benque Viejo Western Border
 - 5. Stann Creek District - Dangriga Town, Commerce Bight, Big Creek, Placencia
 - 6. Toledo District - Punta Gorda, Jalacte
- e. Where an import commodity, after declaration of entry, is taken to an approved warehouse or

storage outside the confines of the port of entry, the imported commodity must be inspected by a Quarantine Officer or Veterinarian Officer of the Authority before such commodity is released for sale and or distribution in Belize.

- f. Any persons who contravene or fail to comply with any of these regulations shall be guilty of an offense against this Act and any import in respect of which any offence is alleged to have been committed may be seized and conviction of the offender shall be forfeited to the Government.

3. NOTES

- a. Validity of the import permit is void if these notes and import conditions are not met.
- b. Authorized port of Entry: One of the legal ports of entry with Quarantine Inspector on duty.
- c. The Head of Animal Health is to be notified two days in advance of the date and time of arrival of live animals at point of entry. Veterinary inspection at point of entry will be done only during daylight hours (9:00 am - 4:00 pm). For your information, the telephone numbers of the veterinarians to contact are:
 - 1. Dr. Victor Gongora - Belmopan (501) 823-0804, 820-197
 - 2. Dr. Miguel Depaz - Cayo (501) 922-131, 924-235
 - 3. Dr. Miguel Figueroa - Orange Walk (501) 323-01
 - 4. Dr. Michael DeSheild - Belize City (501) 244-794, 245-230
- d. Prior to the issue of an import permit for the importation of live animals:
 - 1. The Veterinary Officer in the district where live animals will be quarantined must certify that the quarantine station meets minimal standards and that the importer knows and understands the quarantine arrangements and costs.
 - 2. A risk analysis must have been conducted and the recommendation being that the risk is manageable.
- e. The live animal will be vetted at the point of entry by a Veterinary Officer of BAHA. Live animals not permitted entry will be returned to origin at the expense of the importer.
- f. Any cost incurred in the processing of live animals for entry into Belize will be borne by the importer.

- g. Live animals allowed entry into Belize will be subject to a period of quarantine not less than 30 days. During quarantine the live animals may be retested and must be negative to any test done before released from quarantine. These costs, as well as the cost of supervision during quarantine period including cost of any health measure taken during the period, are to be borne by importer.
- h. No fodder or bedding accompanying the live animals will be allowed entry. Any livestock gear accompanying the live animals will be disinfected at the importers's expense.

C. CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

1. DOCUMENTATION

Once the import license has been issued by BAHA, the importer must now clear customs.

Documents needed for clearance:

- Bill of Laden
- Commercial Invoice
- Phytosanitary Certificate or Sanitary Certificate (depending if it is animal or plant product.)
- Certificate of Origin
- BAHA Import License
- Certificate of Treatment (for live plants and wood products)
- There are individual products that may require additional certificates, but those are not as common and they will be duly expressed in the import license.
- Customs Declaration Form C-100

2. CUSTOMS DECLARATION

Belize uses ASYCUDA, which is an acronym for Automated System for Customs Data. It is a computerized customs management system developed in Geneva by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

ASYCUDA employs the use of a Single Administrative Document (SAD) also known as Customs Declaration Form C-100. This form has simplified the import procedure and reduced the use of many forms. It also uses internationally established codes for filling out, making it much easier for the user. It is a single sheet with 37 blanks that must be filled.

If the user requires additional information regarding customs or instructions on how to fill out Form C-100, the web site for Belize customs is www.customs.gov.bz.

3. DUTIES

Almost all agricultural products entering Belize have a duty of 40%, however, Belize has been reducing some of their duties in the last few years. As of April 1, 2001 some products have been lowered 20%, below is a list of item subject to 20% import duty:

- 02.1 Meat and edible meat offal, salted, in brine, dried or smoked: edible flours and meals of meat or meat offal.
- 03.05 Fish, dried, salted or brine.
- 04.03 Buttermilk curdled milk and cream, and yogurt.
- 13.02 Vegetable saps and extracts
- 16.01 Sausages and similar products of meat, meat offal or blood; food preparations based on these products .
- 17.04 Sugar confectionary.
- 18.06 Chocolate and other food preparations containing cocoa.
- 19.04 Cereals (such as corn flakes).
- 20. Prepared Fruits and Vegetables.
- 21. Sauces, Soups and Ice Cream.

In addition to the duties that must be paid on imports, some products also have a Revenue Replacement Duty. This is an additional duty placed on particular product and has been in effect since 1996. Below is a list of products and duties that must pay the Revenue Replacement Duty:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Fruit and Vegetable Juice | 25% |
| • All meat and meat products | 10% |
| • Peanut butter | 50% |
| • Water and non-alcoholic beverages | 30% |
| • Spirits | BLZ\$35.00/ per imperial gallon |
| • Beer | BLZ\$20.92/ per imperial gallon |

4. WALKING THROUGH AN ENTRY

Importer must begin at the nearest BAHA office one week before the actual import is to occur. First, he fills an application at the BAHA office and pays the BLZ\$10 fee for the application. The Belize dollar (BLZ\$) is pegged to the US\$ at BLZ\$2-\$1. In this application, the importer must specify the products and quantities he is planning to import. If any of the products are on the list that require approval by the Ministry of Trade, the officer in charge of the application will meet with the appropriate officer at the Ministry of Trade and establish whether there is a supply deficit at the present time and, if there is, what amount will be allowed to be imported. The documents needed for this stage are, either sanitary certificate or phytosanitary certificate, and the certificate of origin (these can be faxed copies). This part of the procedure can take up to a week, but generally is accomplished in three days. Once the import license has been issued, the importer must send it to his supplier. Within the permit, it will establish what documents must accompany the shipment and originals must be presented. It is important to remember that the import license just issued must accompany shipment from point of origin to Belize.

With the BAHA license in hand, the importer next goes to the customs office, where he will fill out a Customs Declaration Form C-100 with the documents already previously mentioned in the customs section of this report. After the submitting of the form it is checked by an officer and verified. If all is in order, the documentation is sent to the Customs Cashier, where the importer will pay all the duties, and receives the documentation with the appropriate signatures. This part can take as little as one day but no more than a week. In general, it is accomplished in the first 48 hours.

Lastly, the importer takes all this documents to the port of entry and hands them over to the officer in charge. At this point, a customs officer will verify that all the amounts on the shipment are consistent with the documents. The paperwork now goes to a BAHA inspector, that will also verify that all the sanitary and phytosanitary conditions have been met. At this point, the importer will be allowed to exit the port with his merchandise.

VII. POST CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this report or need assistance exporting to Belize, please contact the U.S. Agricultural Affairs Office at the following address.

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy
Avenida Reforma 7-01 Zona 10
Guatemala, Ciudad 01010
Tel: (502) 332-4030
Fax: (502) 331-8293
email: AgGuatemala@fas.usda.gov

You may also wish to contact:

Commercial Office
United States Embassy
P.O. Box 286
29 Gabourel Lane
Belize City, Belize
Tel: (501) 277-161
Fax: (501) 271-468

For further information on exporting U.S. agricultural products to Belize and other countries, please visit the Foreign Agriculture Service home page: www.fas.usda.gov.

APPENDIX I. LIST OF MAJOR REGULATORY AGENCIES

Name: Nigeli Sosa
Title: Director
Institution: Ministry of Trade and Industry
Address: Administrative Building, Belmopan
Tel: (501) 822-1999

Name: Hugh O'Brien
Title: Chief Agricultural Officer
Institution: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Address: Administrative Building, Belmopan
Tel: (501) 822-241

Name: Nerie T. Sanz
Title: Assistant Managing Director
Institution: Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Address: National Agricultural Show Grounds, Belmopan City
Tel/Fax: (501) 820-197, 820-818

Name: Dr. Michael DeShield
Title: Director of Food Safety
Institution: Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Address: P.O. Box 181, Belize City, Belize
Tel: (501) 254-230

Name: Helen Reynolds-Arana
Title: Director
Institution: Bureau of Standards
Address: Regent St., Belize City

Tel: (501) 271-584

Name: Everard A. Lopez
Title: Comptroller
Institution: Belize Customs
Address: P.O. Box 1530, Belize City
Tel: (501) 274-970

Name: Delilah Cabb
Title: Chief Quarantine Officer
Institution: Belize Agricultural Health Authority
Address: National Agricultural Show Grounds, Belmopan City
Tel: (501) 820-197

APPENDIX II. BELIZE AGRICULTURAL HEALTH AUTHORITY OFFICES

- | | |
|--|--|
| Head of Quarantine | Head of Animal Health |
| Agricultural Show Grounds | Agricultural Show Grounds |
| Belmopan | Belmopan |
| Tel: (501) 823-084 | Tel: (501) 823-084 |
| Fax: (501) 823-084, 820-271 | Fax: (501) 823-084, 820-271 |
| E-mail: baha@btl.net | E-mail: baha@btl.net |
- | | |
|--|--|
| Head of Plant Health | Head of Food Safety |
| Central Farm | Central Investigation Laboratory |
| Cayo | Belize City |
| Tel: (501) 922-131/129 | Tel: (501) 244-794 |
| Fax: (501) 923-773 | Fax: (501) 245-230 |
| E-mail: baha@btl.net | E-mail: baha@btl.net |